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## Setting Appropriate Boundaries

### Codependency

One of the aspects of **codependency** is that we make attempts to please others at the expense of our own needs. The goal is to try to make everyone else happy, and to never expect happiness yourself. In this codependent way of living, we tend to devalue ourselves. We fear rejection & abandonment, and so the need to please others feels like a mandate for ourselves, lest we find ourselves alone and abandoned.

One of the **healthy** actions we can engage in is to set appropriate **boundaries** with others. The idea of boundaries is about seeing yourself in a different way - someone who deserves to be treated with **respect, kindness and dignity**. There will be a need to set a boundary when we feel our sense of **self-concept** and **self-value** is being violated. Boundaries basically place a fence around yourself - in a good way - to protect you from intrusive actions which can violate your sense of dignity and self-respect. Sadly, there are people who will say & do things which are demeaning, mean, unkind, belittling, argumentative, and many other types of poor & unkind behaviors. It's up to you to protect yourself from those unkind behaviors and the best way is by creating **healthy boundaries**.

Some people believe that the process of setting boundaries is a "big, sudden event." But that's not true. Setting boundaries typically happens incrementally as you interact with the people around you, one situation at a time. Like most of our new learned skill...**practice makes perfect**. What may seem difficult at first becomes more natural in time.

One of the most important ways we set boundaries is creating **boundary statements**. These are phrases you can adopt that best express your thoughts in an amicable, clear, and assertive manner. Here are some examples:

"No, I can't do that." When someone is expecting you to do something, you don't wish to do, your thought is if you decline them, they may end up rejecting or guiltning you. You must be able to **love yourself** enough to guard your energy, time & resources.

**There is no need to explain your reasons why, that is not their concern.**

It is important to learn to refuse to accept responsibility for the feelings of others & make them take responsibility for their own perceptions, actions and behaviors.

"If you continue to yell at me, I'm going to leave for a while." You never should be someone's verbal punching bag. There is no rule of relationships that says you must listen to another person berating you, cursing at you, or otherwise verbally abusing you. Again, love yourself enough to exit quickly when yelling starts.



Please reach out to me if you continue to experience symptoms or feel you need help in developing strategies that **can conquer what concerns you**. It's important to know you are not alone. Many suffer in silence. You don't have to. I am here to help. **Heather Cohen Meiselman, MSW, LCSW**